



RHAN

The RHAN Report

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School of Rural Health

From The RHAN Director's Desk

Welcome to the first issue of the RHAN Report for 2009. I trust you all had a safe and productive holiday season.

Although it has been holidays RHAN has continued to work towards excellence in rural health research and capacity building.

One of the main research projects for RHAN from 2008 is the e-Health literacy project. It is with much excitement I let you know that the data collection phase is now complete and data analysis is well underway – we look forward to bringing you the results of that rural study shortly – thank you to those rural health services and individuals that contributed to the study.



RHAN continues to build capacity within a number of rural communities and in partnership with the PHCRED program a number of seminars aimed at educating and enhancing the skills of rural practitioners are being offered again in 2009. Further information can be found within this report.

It is also with great pleasure that we introduce two new research coordinators to the RHAN team in this issue and celebrate some of the successes of the network to date.

Again, I thank you for your support and hope you enjoy sharing in our journey and the accomplishments in rural health research and capacity building.

Dr Maddalena Cross
Director of the Rural Health Academic Network

Inside this issue:

Introducing our new RHAN Coordinators	3
Evaluating Effective Participation in Rural Residential Aged Care	4
Human Research Ethics Committees & Research Ethics	5
The RHAN Research Team	6

Improving the health of rural and regional communities—the 2009 School of Rural Health Research Conference

Planning is currently underway for the next annual conference to be hosted by the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne in Shepparton on 23rd and 24th November 2009. The focus of the conference will be promoting health across rural and regional communities.

This year we are hoping to offer two full days of activities.

Day 1 (Monday 23rd November 2009): *Showcasing health promotion services, resources and activities*

On this first day organizations and businesses will be provided with the opportunity to showcase activities and services on offer in the region which boost community awareness of healthy lifestyles to prevent illness or better manage existing conditions.

In the afternoon a community forum will be held with the theme: *Health in rural and regional communities: Whose responsibility is it?* A variety of health practitioners, policy-makers, academics, media representatives and community

(Continued on page 2)

Improving the health of rural and regional communities—the 2009 School of Rural Health Research Conference

(Continued from page 1)

representatives will be invited to form a panel to discuss this important issue, with lots of audience participation.

Day 2 (Tuesday 24th November 2009): *Research conference*

The second day will have a research focus allowing clinicians, academics and other health professionals the opportunity to give oral and poster presentations of research projects relevant to the conference theme.

We invite submissions covering a wide range of topics relevant to the conference theme including, but not limited to, the Victorian Government Health promotion priority areas:

- Promoting physical activity and active communities
- Promoting accessible and nutritious food
- Promoting mental health and wellbeing
- Reducing tobacco-related harm
- Reducing and minimising harm from alcohol and other drugs
- Safe environments to prevent unintentional injury
- Sexual and reproductive health

Invitation for submissions

The aim of these two days is encourage communication between academics, health practitioners and providers, and the community as a whole with the goal of improving rural and regional health.

We would welcome ideas, suggestions, recommendations and submissions for activities and displays for Day 1. Please send these to Anne Marmo by email amarmo@unimelb.edu.au or contact her by phone 03 58234553.

A conference website will be available soon with further information on procedures for submitting conference abstracts for Day 2. Please check the School of Rural Health website for the conference link: www.ruralhealth.unimelb.edu.au

RESEARCH SEMINAR PROGRAM 2009

Free, Community Seminars

Month	Day	Date	Time	Topic
April	Wed	1st	10.00am - 12.30pm	Rural & Indigenous Health Research
May	Wed	20th	10.00am - 12.30pm	Introduction to statistics & quantitative analysis
May	Wed	20th	1.00pm - 3.30pm	Introduction to qualitative analysis
June	Tues	16th	10.00am - 12.30pm	Presenting your research – conference abstracts, paper & poster presentations
June	Tues	16th	1.00pm - 3.30pm	Writing a research journal article for publication
August	Tues	18th	10.00am—3.30pm	Introduction to the SPSS statistical computing package

Registration for these seminars is essential. Morning tea will be provided.
To register, please contact Anne Marmo amarmo@unimelb.edu.au PH 03 58234500
All seminars will be held at the School of Rural Health, 49 Graham Street, Shepparton.

**A University of Melbourne Department of Rural Health,
 Primary Health Care Research Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) Initiative**

Introducing Our New RHAN Coordinators

Kaye Ervin—Moira Healthcare Alliance

Kaye Ervin joined the RHAN team in August 2008. Her role is to conduct and facilitate research and actively participate in projects that build service capacity in the Moira region. Preparation of submissions and grants to attract funding for various projects and production of publications arising from research are an important activity of the RHAN role. Assisting with establishment of information management and communication technology within local region health services also underpins the role.

Kaye supports the Moira Healthcare Alliance and her territory covers the Yarrowonga District Health Service, Numurkah District Health Service, Nathalia District Hospital and Cobram District Hospital where she is based. These are small rural health services within the Moira Shire, providing health care to their local communities and have undergone enormous growth within the past 10 years, particularly in the community health sector. The services are renowned for their collaborative efforts, with recognition at state level for the Moira model of education, which provides training for nurses locally.

Kaye has worked within Moira Shire and the Goulburn Valley for 19 years as a nurse and educator. In that time she has held positions in all the Moira health services as a nurse educator for LaTrobe University, GOTAFE, and Wodonga TAFE, facilitating student placements and teaching course content locally. As well as her current RHAN position Kaye continues to work casually in the aged care sector. Prior to joining RHAN Kaye spent 5 years as a Division 1 nurse at Irvin House (Cobram District Hospital). Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Education, Masters of Education and a Diploma of Business. Kaye is currently working towards endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner in Aged Care.

Kaye's main research interest is aged care, in particular polypharmacy issues in aged care. Prior to taking up her RHAN role Kaye was involved in a number of projects. In 2007—2008 Kaye was project Co-ordinator for Count Us In!, a DHS funded project concerned with social inclusion in residential aged care. Kaye also coordinated the Nurse Practitioner Project (Round 5.2) in 2007, funded by the Nurses Board of Victoria (NBV), and acted as a co researcher in partnership with the University of Melbourne for a DHS funded project entitled Evaluating Effective Participation (EEP). The EEP project is ongoing in 2008 – 2009 and evaluated satisfaction and participation of residents relatives in aged care pre and post introduction of a case management model of care. All projects required comprehensive reporting, final reports are available on NBV and DHS websites. An article on Count Us In! was also published in the Australian Ageing Agenda (Jan/Feb 2008 edition). Results of the EEP project will be submitted for publication in early 2009. Kaye has presented the EEP project at numerous conferences, both locally at the Hume Region Aged Forum, and John Richards Initiative research forum and in numerous states as part of the Better Practice events 2008 for the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.



Sarah Finlayson—Benalla & District Memorial Hospital



Sarah Finlayson is the newest member of the RHAN team having commenced her RHAN role on 24 November 2008. At the same time Sarah commenced as Quality and Risk Manager at Benalla and District Memorial Hospital (BDMH). Although new to BDMH, Sarah is no stranger to RHAN having previously held the position of coordinator at Moira.

BDMH is a rural health service which provides a number of services to its community including Accident and Emergency, Home Nursing (district nursing, palliative care and hospital in the home), Surgery (operating theatre, 12 bed surgical ward and 10 bed day procedure unit), Maternity (118 births 07-08), Acute care (31 bed medical ward), Aged care (30 bed high level care residential aged care facility), Radiology, and Community and allied health services including service partnerships with Violet Town, Euroa and Mansfield.

As Quality and Risk Manager at BDMH Sarah monitors and develops systems to support continuous quality improvement across the organisation's clinical, support and corporate functions and also monitors and develops the organisation's risk management framework. A key element of her role is supporting staff in the organisation to monitor and evaluate their services and to comply with relevant legislation, industry and accreditation standards.

Sarah has five years experience working in various rural and regional health services in program, project and direct service delivery roles. Sarah's experience includes strategic and service planning, project management and implementation and research. Her qualifications include Bachelor of Business (Accountancy), RMIT and Graduate Diploma of Management and Rural Health, Monash University. Sarah is currently completing the final year of a Master of Health Service Management

(Continued on page 4)

Introducing Our New RHAN Coordinators

(Continued from page 3)

through Monash University.

Like Kaye Ervin, Sarah's main research interest and experience is in Aged Care. Sarah also has an interest in cancer and palliative care research having worked in cancer services.

In 2009 Sarah will partner with Moira Healthcare Alliance RHAN Co-ordinator Kaye Ervin to undertake a study of polypharmacy in rural residential aged care facilities. Sarah and Kaye undertook a DHS funded controlled before and after study in 2007-2008 investigating a model of case management in rural residential aged care facilities supervised by Dr Elaine Tan from the School of Rural Health. This project was completed in the latter part of 2008 and the research team are aiming to publish the findings from this study in 2009.

Sarah undertook a PHCRED fellowship in 2007 investigating a model of case conferencing in geriatrics in rural residential aged care facilities and continued this work throughout 2008 completing a major 'case study' and final report for this project for her Master of Health Service Management Course. Sarah's goal is to publish this work as well in 2009. Sarah is now providing mentorship to one of the School of Rural Health's 2009 PHCRED fellows.

Sarah has recently become involved in working with the Benalla Catholic Parish social justice leaders involved in supporting and raising awareness of the role and work of CARITAS, a Catholic national and international aid agency

Evaluating Effective Participation in Rural Residential Aged Care Facilities.

Undertaken by RHAN Researchers Sarah Finlayson and Kaye Ervin, this project aimed to evaluate the influence of a model of nursing home case management on family involvement in residents' care.

Nursing home case management involves educating nursing staff and changing care processes so that care of nursing home residents becomes more holistic and less 'task-oriented'. A key element of case management is facilitating family involvement in the 'team' care of residents.

The study involved a collaboration between the Moira Healthcare Alliance, Cobram District Hospital, Yarrawonga District Health Service and the School of Rural Health. The project team included the Moira Healthcare Alliance RHAN co-ordinator, the Cobram District Hospital residential aged care facility Nurse Unit Manager and academic supervisor Dr Elaine Tan from the School of Rural Health. Statistical analysis was undertaken by Chris Cunningham who also works with the School of Rural Health.

Funding to support the project was granted by the Department of Human Services, Victoria, Evaluating Effectiveness of Participation (EEP) initiative. The EEP projects were required to undertake an evaluation of consumer, carer or community participation set within a broad quality and safety improvement framework.

A controlled before and after study design was used involving pre and post intervention testing and comparison between an intervention and control groups. Two 30 bed rural high care residential aged care facilities participated in this study, one as an intervention facility and one as a control facility. Staff from the intervention facility underwent case management training and resources were allocated to implement case management.

General demographic information was collected about the family member participants. The Family Involvement Questionnaire and the Family Perceptions of Care Tool trialled in previous studies were used pre and post intervention to determine the level of family involvement and perceptions of care.

Visiting levels increased in the Intervention site but not the Control site. No significant differences were found for the two sites over the two phases but increases were seen in the written contacts, the attendances at social activities, overseeing staff interactions, attendance at case conferences and rate of family member decision-making about treatments or care for the Intervention Site. The overall satisfaction with care and the relationships increased at the Intervention site but the changes were not significant.

There were some positive changes at the Intervention Site following the implementation of case management but the small sample size and the possible ceiling effect due to pre-test satisfaction may have impacted on the significance of the results. Confounding factors resulting from staff attrition may have also limited the effectiveness of the intervention.

Human Research Ethics Committees and Research Ethics

'The relationship between researchers and research participants is the ground on which human research is conducted. The values of respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence, help to shape that relationship as one of trust, mutual responsibility and ethical equality.'

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007)

Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) play a central role in the Australian system of ethical oversight of research involving humans. HRECs review research proposals involving human participants to ensure that they are ethically acceptable and in accordance with relevant standards and guidelines. HRECs report to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC) also plays an important role in this system. There are more than 200 HRECs in institutions and organisations across Australia. Many other countries have similar systems.

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC 2007) sets out the national guidelines for ethical conduct in research involving human participants. Australian HRECs use these guidelines as the basis for approving research, and researchers are expected to design their projects in accordance with them. The purpose of the Statement is to promote ethical research that accords participants the respect and protection that is due to them, and is of benefit to the wider community. The Statement clarifies the responsibilities of researchers in the ethical design, conduct and dissemination of results of human research.

It is important to note that 'Human research' has a broad definition and includes research conducted with or about people, or their data or tissue. You need ethics approval if you are a University staff member, a postgraduate student and/or want to conduct research activities involving humans. These include, but are not restricted to

- Gathering information about human beings (and organisations) through interviewing, surveying, questionnaires, observation of human behaviour, audio/video taping, administering tests or stimuli, collecting or using human tissue/bone/blood or other body fluids
- Clinical trials.
- Using archived data.
- Study or research in illegal activities.

The University of Melbourne is committed to the highest standard of integrity in research. The University's Code of Conduct for Research prescribes the standards of responsible and ethical conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University. At the University of Melbourne the Central Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has oversight of all matters pertaining to human research. Reporting to the HREC are three Human Ethics Sub-Committees (HESCs) – Health Sciences HESC, Behavioural & Social Sciences HESC, and Humanities & Applied Sciences HESC - which have responsibility for the review and approval of individual research projects. The membership of the HREC and each HESC is in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007). Human Ethics Advisory Groups (HEAGs), based in departments, schools or faculties, provide initial review of all ethics applications and report to HESCs. They:

- conduct technical and ethical reviews of all projects emanating from a department/school/centre/faculty;
- provide feedback to researchers on their research;
- have delegated authority to approve Minimal Risk applications;
- provide advice to HESCs;
- register projects that have been approved by an external HREC;
- discuss and deliberate on any research ethics matter.

Projects that present more than low risk (as identified via the online application process) must be reviewed by a properly constituted human research ethics committee. Following an initial assessment by the HEAG such projects are referred to one of the University's three discipline-based HESCs for review and approval. The HESCs review applications in the fields of Health Sciences, Behavioural and Social Science and Humanities and Applied Sciences.

For further information see:

<http://cms.research.unimelb.edu.au/humanethics> at the University of Melbourne.

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health_ethics/index.htm at NHMRC

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A collaborative network of people,
activities and research



School of Rural Health

The **RHAN** is a collaborative network of people, activities and information to support:

- ✓ Health care quality improvement
- ✓ Research and development
- ✓ Professional (staff) development, teaching and learning
- ✓ Knowledge transfer and community engagement

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